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ABSTRACT

The individualistic enterprise of education is questioned in this paper. The scientific movement in education in collaboration with private corporations and federal funding has fostered an individualistic enterprise that promotes a restricted role of the individual in society. Three well-known individualization projects are Individually Guided Education (IGE), Individually Prescribed Instruction (IPI), and Program for Learning in Accordance with Needs (PLAN). These federally funded individualization projects are systems of instruction at the curricular level. Linking systems management to school reform involves the alteration of school environments. Many educators became concerned with the social relations that underlie the use of scientifically prepared systematized curricular programs. The view of the individual inherent in systems management instruction and its associated curricular forms is economic individualism. Economic individualism brings into question the role of personal gain and private control in relation to the schools' purpose in society. Economic individualism and its inequalities are not realized in the schooling process since it is taken for granted that the process is fair. The role of education in supporting this economic individualism should be questioned. In this capacity, education restricts the kinds of individual development that serve to improve society. (SM)

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The Individualistic Enterprise of Education

by

Grace Scering

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Introduction

Good education is individualized instruction. The connection between individualization and the quality of education has been taken for granted with little attention to the social definition of the individual. The emphasis on individualization in education has been the basis of school reform efforts which took shape in the 60's and has continued into the 70's and 80's. Individualization projects promoted by the United States Office of Education and private corporations have been associated with school improvement. It is this individualistic enterprise which is being questioned in this paper.

Three of the more well-known of the individualization projects are IGE (Individually Guided Education, IPI (Individually Prescribed Instruction), and PLAN (Program for Learning in Accordance with Needs). These federally funded individualization projects are systems of instruction (Chase, 1977) at the curricular level. They constitute an alternate curricular form. The linking of systems management to school reform involves the alteration of school environments. Distinctive patterns of organization and management foster new sets of interactive relationships between students, teachers, and administrators (Carlson, 1982; Chase, 1977; Talmage, 1975).

Educators have been concerned not only about the costs of these programs which were funded with tax monies (Scriven, 1975), but about the social relations which underlie the use of scientifically prepared systematized curricular programs. Economic structures associated with the scientific management systems have promoted a view of the individual which is not consonant with the participants' abilities to articulate and transform the social conditions of work. The view of the individual inherent in systems management instruction and its associated curricular forms is economic individualism. Its socio-historical roots are in an individualism which reflects a narrowness in individual development. The scientific movement in education in collaboration with private corporations and federal funding has fostered an individualistic enterprise which promotes a restricted role of the individual in society.

Individualism

American individualism is widely acknowledged and deeply felt. "Personal liberty, individual initiative, and private search for happiness are values and ideas rooted deeply in the fabric of American society" (Cagan, 1978, p. 229). Rugged individualism characterized the role of the individual as personal accomplishment in the practical settling of the American West. Personal accomplishment and social

development were synonomous even though both were rooted in laissez-faire capitalism. Corporation capitalism promoted the role of the state in ensuring social cohesiveness for efficient productivity. Increased and efficient productivity were to assure the democratization of success (Cagan, 1982). The scientific movement in education has fostered the same technocratic approach to individualization. The structures and motives were the same as corporate capitalism, an enterprise to promote efficiency.

Individualism continues to be salient for American education in that individual autonomy is the preservation of self in regard to the individual development of intellectual, ethical, and moral reasoning. Efforts to individualize instruction along these lines are not the same as the contemporary individualism associated with systems management, which limits the role of the individual in society. In the scientific movement to individualize instruction, the role of the individual in relationship to the instructional process is defined externally. External conceptualization of school work forces the content and social relations in the instructional process into a preconceived form. Participants' motivations and constructions do not generate the processes and meanings which serve their social ends. That is, individuals do not participate in the social whole of school work.

The social relations of systems management are based on an industrial model of production. Technical control is the sine qua non of the industrial model. Production is atomized or subdivided as a means of efficiency. Fragmentation of job tasks and use of less-skilled workers in production have been accompanied by an elaboration and centralization of bureaucratic controls. Technical control is based on the separation of planning and conceptualization from the execution of production (Carlson, 1982).

The old individualism (Dewey, 1930) was tied to land ownership and feudal social relations. The contemporary individualism characteristic of systems management curricular forms, is tied to capitalism. Individualism is economic individualism to the extent that profits which are the engine of capitalism, determine the social relationship of individuals to their work. In advanced capitalism, tasks are standardized and routinized so that control of management and production is "embedded in the technology and bureaucratic organization of production rather than in personal authority" (Carlson, 1982, p. 129).

The institutionalization of economic individualism has given the opportunity for a few to be successful in

business for personal gain. Thus, individuality for the majority has ceased to be a vital public process. Technology "shuts off" social relations to the extent that it is used for personal gain. Technology is linked to profits as a result of the decision-making process rather than because of its basis in scientific insight. In the case of curricular forms of instruction, the collaboration of federal monies with that of private corporations (Carlson, 1982) links private gain to curriculum. In the 80's, management systems are being promoted by private corporations as alternatives to the age-graded, self-contained or subject-centered curricular forms. The one-sided concerns inherent in the development of these systems equates the instructional process and contents to profits for personal gain. Thus, social relations associated with economic individualism penetrate the classroom.

Individually Guided Education

IGE (Individually Guided Education) was a system "devised for the management of curriculum and instruction" (Chase, 1977, p. xiii). As an exemplar of systems management as school reform, it was "conceptualized as a comprehensive alternative system of schooling designed to produce higher education achievements" (Talmage, 1975, p. 48). A school

using IGE would first determine instructional objectives for each student based on diagnostic assessments of achievement levels in reading and math and on learning styles. "At the heart of IGE is the instructional programming model for the individualized student (IPM) . . ." (Talmage, 1976, p. 53). Variations accommodate individual differences and guidance on the part of the teacher, time spent interacting with the teacher, different instructional media, and small versus large-group instruction. These aspects of IGE are standardized through pretests and postests.

The technology of IGE is its main asset. The rationale for the multiunit plan for IGE is that the multiunit organization has considerable relevance in a "modern technological society" (Nussel, Inglis, & Wiersman, 1976, p. 32). Multiunit organization has been motivated by the "need for more competent people with specialized skills in a time when technological expertise is rewarded" (Nussel, Inglis, & Wiersma, 1976, p. 255). Other teacher roles are concerned with the function of the unit which is "to plan, to carry out, and evaluate, as a hierarchical team, instructional programs for each child" (Talmage, 1975, p. 52). The principal's role in the multiunit is greater administrative responsibility and management of in-service activities.

A specific aspect of the roles inherent in IGE technology is their social relationships. The hierarchical relationship is reflected in vertical authority, and alienation is reflected in the lack of control students and teachers have over the content and motivations of the instructional process. The process and content of IGE are externally defined and implemented in the technology of IGE. There is leeway for teacher input, especially in social studies, but the teacher's suggested mode of instruction and content must be standardized so that tests may be taken by the students. Thus, content is limited (Gitlin, 1983) to what can be tested.

Systems Management and Critical Theory

The use of "individualized instructional delivery systems" (Talmage, 1976, p. 40) reflects a technocratic rationality. These systems promote social relations which are antithetical to an integrated individual who interacts with the conditions as well as the materials of the workplace. Motivations, intentions, and interests are not generated by students/teachers and student/student interactions which can take shape through conceptualization of the learning process as well as the content.

IGE is not just technology but a "complex social invention" (Popkewitz, Tabachik, & Wehlage, 1982, p. 4). It brings into question the role of the school in

legitimizing categories of competence, knowledge, and social structuring related to economic individualism. "By attuning young people to a set of social relationships similar to those of the workplace, schooling attempts to gear the development of personal needs to its requirement" (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 131).

Apple (1971), Mazza (1982), and Bowles and Gintis (1976) refer to the hidden curriculum where patterning of everyday regularities in classrooms communicate messages to children. Values about social relations and control may remain tacit, but they impact as much as the explicit curriculum (Mazza, 1982, p. 47). In addition, the forms of knowledge made legitimate by those who distribute school materials is another form of control (Mazza, 1982; Taxel, 1983). The forms of knowledge of systems management instruction are factual and focus on skills which can be measured. Carlson (1982) states that "individualized instructional systems . . . . are attempts to reorganize the actual everyday process of instruction according to 'performance specification', so that it will fit within an overarching systems management framework for control of the nation's schools" (p. 141).

The fact that the nature of knowledge is outside the minds of students, teachers, and principals gives rise to authoritarianism as opposed to participation as

autonomous individuals in the democratic process of schooling. It also limits the grasping of knowledge to process and content defined in the systems management instructional packages rather than the whole of knowledge as a social construct. Dewey (1944) explicated the social basis of knowledge by stating that:

> A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily conjoint communicated experiences. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity (p. 87).

The importance of social interaction with the wider community promotes organic wholeness of the individual with the community. The problem now is that it is efficiency and economic success which has permeated the education process through systems management individualization projects such as IGE. Thus, it is necessary to question the individualistic enterprise of education and its role in sustaining the status quo on issues of racism, sexism, and inequality.

Conclusion

The fact that through individualized systems management delivery systems, economic individualism

has come to be equated with educational reform brings into question the role of personal gain and private control in relation to the school's purpose in society. Citizenship is a social endeavor defined by the state's responsibility for the schooling process. Ideally, the individual is not to be subsumed by the institutions but enhanced in order to improve institutions and their societal functions. This involves a realization and understanding that the individual interacts with the community and institutions not as a functional unit for utilitarian purposes but as an organized whole. That the integrated individual selects certain aspects of society to be of interest, does not deny the role of society in shaping the integrated individual.

Everyone can agree that good education is attending to individual differences but individualization as a concern does not detemine how the individualistic enterprise of education proceeds. Only as the individualism is experienced by teachers, students, and administrators, can the impact of the individualistic enterprise be known. The enterprise is especially important since it has implications for how participants in the schooling process become conscious of the world and how they act based on their structuring of this world.

Teachers are critical in dealing with content which reflects issues involving the relationship of the individual to school work and the wider community. Teachers can deal with forms of knowledge as inquiry into the structuring of everyday living and the disciplines and through literature and art (Greene, 1978) as cultural terrain. However, the use of prepackaged curricula deskills teachers (Goodman, 1986) so that forms of knowledge are not challenged. Giroux and McLaren (1986) indicate that when teachers become technicians and promote efficiency they promote schooling as economic investment, not as critical citizenship which empowers. Tozer (1986) concludes that not only are teachers being deskilled but their authority is being eroded. These perspectives on teachers' roles reflect a technocratic approach on the part of some educators.

The ultimate impact of the individualistic enterprise of education is the opportunity in the wider community. Economic individualism embedded in systems management instructional systems gives the appearance that all have been given an equal chance to succeed. Economic individualism and its inequalities are not realized in the schooling process since it is taken-for-granted that the process is fair. In this context, education is a

function of society. In addition, "teacher education rarely addresses either the moral implications of societal inequalities within our present form of industrial capitalism" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p. 229). Economic individualism is supported by teacher education programs focusing on subjects rather than on students' subjectivities. That is, the lived experiences of students, teachers, and administrators are not considered integral to the individualistic enterprise of education. The role of education in supporting this economic individualism is to be questioned. In this capacity, education restricts individual development which serves to improve society.

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